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CASTLE-NICK—MILE-CASTLE, AND PART OF THE ROMAN WALL.

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THE ROMAN WALL IN BRITAIN.

BY

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To the educated American, upon his first visit to our ancestral home in England, the most fascinating objects his eyes rest upon unquestionably are her ivy-grown ruins, with their crumbling battlements and mouldering stones. He feels his youthful confidence, fostered by our untrimmed fields and shaggy forests, gently giving way to wholesome reverence, as his imagination wanders among these venerable relics of "a foregone world." But if Gothic Fane or Norman Keep, in their lovely ruin, whisper to his heart their message of soothing melancholy, how stimulating to his intellectual insight is his first glimpse at the mighty traces left upon the little island by the masters of the ancient world. It is of the most marvellous of these that I shall attempt to give a slight picture: and I will preface my account of it by quoting some fine verses about it contributed

more than half a century ago to *Blackwood's Magazine* :

“ Where yonder reaching hill slopes boldly down,
 Far-stretching eastward, with a long decline,
 Stand where the cottages the summit crown,
 * * * * *
 [And mark] that line of green that seems to sweep
 Sheer forward on to the not distant deep ;
 * * * * *
 What an unbending course it seems to keep !
 * * * * *
 Here plant thy foot where many a foot hath trod,
 Whose scarce-known home was o'er the southern wave,
 And sit thee down ; on no ignoble sod,
 Green from the ashes of the great and brave ;
 Here stretched that chain which nations could enslave ;
 * * * * *
 This shapeless mound, thou know'st not what to call,
 Was the world's wonder once—this is The Roman Wall.

There was the deep-trenched Vallum—to the left ;
 The Agger here ; o'er many a hill they went,
 O'er many a stream ; through many a craggy cleft,
 An endless and perpetual battlement.
 And when the spring the frozen nations sent,
 The restless Pict—, forth from his thawing snows,
 This was his bound-stone, oft with blood besprent—,
 Here, where the daisies settle, and the rose
 Now trusts her tender leaves, and the shy violet blows.”*

“ Few who have visited this district ” says the learned historian of “ The Romans under the Empire,” “ have resisted the contagion of the Wall-Fever, caught from the genial enthusiasm of the local antiquaries, the loving reverence of those who dwell beside it, and the three-fold interest derived from its bold design and execution, its much-contested history, and the romantic scenery with which it is surrounded.” †

I propose first to give with some particularity an ac-

* The Roman Wall—*Blackwood's Magazine* (Oct., 1822), vol. xii., p. 409.

† Charles Merivale. *Quarterly Review* (Jan., 1860), p. 123.

count of the origin and character of this great work, and of the conflicting theories that have been maintained in regard to the share taken by different persons in its erection. Here we encounter the confusing circumstance of having, in the words of Dr. Latham, "more builders than structures."*

Then I shall endeavor to present a slight picture of its present condition and of what the inquisitive traveller will see as he strolls along its course. In doing this I shall have occasion to refer to some of the numerous discoveries that have been made during the progress of extended excavations carried on at several points along its line by Mr. John Clayton, of Chesters. These may serve to illustrate somewhat the character of the men, and the manner of their life, who for three long centuries, through summer's heat and winter's cold, kept ward and watch along its wind-swept battlements against the fierce barbarians of the North, struggling for their liberty with the mighty power of Rome.†

In using the term, "The Roman Wall," I wish to be understood to mean the great structure, drawn by the Roman conquerors across the northern part of England, from the mouth of the Tyne, at Wallsend, near Newcastle, on the east, to Bowness on the Solway, on the west; a distance of some seventy-three and a half miles. This work has always been called The Great Wall; while for the dwellers in its neighborhood it has usually gone by the name of The Picts' Wall.

* Smith's "Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography," vol. i., p. 436.

† I wish to acknowledge, once for all, my great indebtedness to "The Roman Wall, a description of the mural barrier of the north of England, by the Rev. J. Collingwood Bruce, LL.D., F. S. A." (third edition, 1867), from which I have freely borrowed whatever seemed useful for my purpose.

But it must always be borne in mind, to prevent confusion, that the Romans also built another wall across the narrowest part of Scotland, a little to the north of Edinburgh and Glasgow, from Bridgness, on the Frith of Forth, to Dunbarton, on the Frith of Clyde. A few preliminary words of explanation about that structure seem to be required. The northern wall was made of earth only, and was about half the length of The Great Wall, some thirty-seven miles. It was built (A. D. 141) by Lollius Urbicus, legatus, or provincial governor, of Antoninus Pius, along a line of forts constructed by Agricola, sixty years previous (A. D. 81).^{*} Accordingly it is known to historians as the Wall of Antoninus; locally it has usually gone by the name of Graham's Dyke. Many modern historians are of the opinion that it was this wall, subsequently strengthened by Septimius Severus, during his famous campaign in Scotland (A. D. 208), which the later Roman writers have had in mind, when they have spoken of the Wall of Severus.[†] Very few traces of the Wall of Antoninus are still to be seen, and the principal interest attaching to it in recent times has arisen from the discovery about twenty years ago of an inscription which marked its eastern termination. It was that discovery which caused Sir Charles Lyell to retract his previously expressed opinion that there had been an elevation of the coast line of central Scotland, subsequent to the times of the Roman occupation.[‡]

Lest it may appear strange that the Romans should

^{*} Capitolinus, "Vit. Antonini," 5.

[†] Mommsen, "Provinces of the Roman Empire," vol. i., p. 203; Skene, "Celtic Scotland," vol. i., p. 89, (*Note* 27); Elton, "Origins of English History," p. 325.

[‡] Lyell, "Antiquity of Man" (fourth edition), p. 55; following the authority of D. M. Home (Trans. Roy. Soc. of Edinburgh), vol. xxvii., p. 39.

have been at the pains to construct at separate times two different walls across one little corner of their domain, to mark the bounds of the empire, and to restrain the attacks of their unsubdued barbarian neighbors, it must be borne in mind that this was in precise accord with their habitual policy as displayed elsewhere. Julius Cæsar first drew a line of forts along the course of the Rhine, at the foot of the Jura range, in order to protect the Gallic province against the inroads of the Helvetii. After the conquest of Dacia by Trajan, a great earthwork, or Limes, afterwards strengthened in parts by Probus with walls of stone, was constructed from near Ratisbon, on the Danube, to the neighborhood of Cologne, on the Rhine.* Throughout portions of this whole distance (variously estimated at from two hundred to four hundred miles), there still exist extensive remains, which go now by the name of *The Devil's Wall* or *The Heathen's Wall* (Heidenmauer). This, however, must not be confounded with another Heidenmauer, where Cooper lays the scene of his novel bearing that title, which is to be seen on the mountain near St. Odille, in Alsace, and which has probably come down from prehistoric times.

But of all the relics of Roman power anywhere remaining, of a similar character, the remarkable structure in northern England is on a much grander scale, and displays a far greater amount of labor and skill than any to be found elsewhere. The designation of The Great Wall is well deserved. It was the opinion of Horsley,

*Gibbon, "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," Chap. xii; Yates, "On the Limes Rhæticus and Limes Transrhenanus" (Trans. Archæol. Inst. 1852), vol. viii; Hodgkin (Archæologia Æliana, 1882).

by far the ablest of the earlier English antiquaries, and whom Bruce justly styles "the great Horsley," that this work also, as well as that in Scotland, grew out of a line of camps and forts built by Agricola.* In the exquisite life of Agricola written by his son-in-law, the historian Tacitus, we are told about "two arms of two opposite seas which shoot a great way into the country, and are parted only by the strip of land which was covered by the Roman forts."† Plainly this refers to the line of forts in Scotland I have already spoken of, where The Wall of Antoninus was afterwards built. This was in Agricola's fourth campaign in Scotland, (A. D. 81) and marked the limits of the region he had secured. Afterwards, in two campaigns, Agricola penetrated still farther North, and defeated the Caledonians in that famous battle of Mons Graupius, which, by a mis-reading of the early editors was called Mons Grampius. That great conflict is memorable for the speech of Galgacus to his troops in which he tells them that the Romans "make a solitude and call it peace." Its site has always been a puzzle to the Scotch antiquaries, who have sought for it near the chain of the Grampian Hills, although the name of the Grampians is of no older date than the XIVth century.‡ Burton, the latest historian of Scotland, gives up in despair the problem of its locality.§

* Horsley, "*Britannia Romana*," p. 98.

† Tacitus, "*Vit. Agricolæ*," Ch. xxiii.

‡ Mackintosh, "*Hist. of Civilization in Scotland*" (vol. i., p. 94), gives the various sites that have been suggested:—Chambers and Gen. Roy at Ardoch; Gordon at Dalginross, in Perthshire; some in Fife; others at Urie, in Kincardineshire; and Skene at Cleaven Dyke, near the junction of the Tay and the Isla.

§ *Hist. of Scotland*, vol. i., p. 16.

But although there can be no question in regard to Agricola's northern chain of forts, Horsley's opinion, that he also built a second line across Northumberland, was based solely upon his understanding of another vague passage in Agricola's biography, in which we are told that "many states, that up to this time had been free were surrounded by posts and castles."* In the light of the knowledge of Horsley's time, a century and a half ago, this opinion was, perhaps, not unreasonable; and it has been generally followed by the older school of English antiquaries, including Hodgson, in his elaborate and learned history of the county of Northumberland, published about forty years ago.† But it is no longer tenable in the light of recent explorations and discoveries; no inscription has ever been found along the line of the wall bearing a date earlier than the time of Hadrian, forty years later than Agricola's day; many of the stationary camps attached to the wall could only have been placed where they stand in order to accommodate the garrisons which were to man it; and this theory has been abandoned by Hubner, the editor of that volume of the great collection of Roman inscriptions, which is devoted to those found in Britain.‡ As Hubner is the latest authority, who has thoroughly investigated the question, this point may be considered finally settled. All that can be regarded as probable is that Agricola in his advance northward seized and fortified certain commanding positions, which afterwards fell in with the line of the wall.

* Vit. Agricolæ, Ch. xx.

† Hist. of Northumberland, vol. iii., part 2, p. 157.

‡ Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, vol. vii., p. 99.

Before considering the question, however, by whom these great works actually were constructed, it will be well to take into account the nature of the region they would have to traverse, as well as to describe with considerable detail their method of construction. From the Tyne to the Solway, in a direct line, is a distance of only about sixty miles, admirably adapted to fortification from the nature of the ground. The Tyne and the Eden, with their respective tributaries, rising together in the central portion of the island, fall to the east and to the west into deep trough-like valleys, whose northern banks have a considerable elevation. But between the headwaters of the south Tyne and the Irthing, a branch of the Eden, the land has been raised in some primeval convulsion of nature, and presents a formidable barrier of basaltic cliffs, facing to the North. Sometimes this has been styled the backbone of England. This natural barrier of cliff and stream, broken only at intervals by abrupt fissures, is of itself no slight obstacle to the approach of an enemy from the north, and it was rendered very difficult of passage by the system of fortifications adopted. If we study carefully the topographical conditions of the country through which these have been carried, it will become evident that they have been equally well designed as a protection against sudden surprise from the south. The natives of the region on that side of the wall, although conquered, were not to be trusted. In the event of their kinsmen in the north gaining an advantage over their invaders, they would have been prompt to avail themselves of it. This the Romans understood, and with characteristic prudence made themselves secure on both sides, by what was in reality

an intrenched camp, extending across the island, and fortified both ways.

The design of this great system of defences may best be made clear, if it be understood that it was made up of three essential and distinct portions. *First*, there was a wall of stone, or *mur**us*, strengthened by a ditch on the northern side. *Second*, came a wall of earth, or *vallum*, uniformly to the south of the stone wall, consisting of three ramparts, separated by a ditch. *Third*, there was a series of stationary-camps, castles, and watch-towers, together with the roads for the accommodation of the troops who manned the wall. These roads were either between the *mur**us* and the *vallum*, or to the south of them both.

All the works run from one side of the island to the other, nearly in a straight line, and for the most part in close companionship. The *mur**us* and the *vallum* are generally within sixty or eighty yards of each other, although the distance varies according to the nature of the ground. Sometimes they are so close as barely to admit of the military way, while in one or two instances they are upwards of half a mile apart. They are most widely separated in the high lands of the central region. Here the stone wall seeks the highest ridges; while its usual companion, the earth wall, runs along the adjacent valley. Both works, however, are so arranged as to afford each other the greatest support which the nature of the country allows. The stone wall usually seizes those positions, which give it the greatest advantage on its northern side; the earth wall, on the other hand, is so drawn as to occupy ground that is strongest towards the south.

As before stated, the murus, or stone wall, extended from Wallsend, on the Tyne, to Bowness, on the Solway, a distance of seventy-three and a half miles; but the vallum falls short of this distance by about three miles at each end. The most striking feature of both is the determined manner in which they pursue their straightforward course. The earthwork actually makes fewer deviations from a straight line than the stone wall; but as the latter sometimes traverses higher ground, its tendency to adhere to a direct line is more conspicuous. Stretching along in its onward course the murus swerves from a straight line only to take in the boldest elevations; but if it never swerves except with this object in view, so it never fails to seize the highest points as they occur, no matter how often it is compelled to change its direction; never bending in a curve, but always at an angle. Hence, along the craggy precipices of the central basaltic ridge it is compelled to pursue a remarkably zigzag course, taking in every projecting rock. This mode of proceeding involves the accommodating of itself equally to the depressions of the mountainous region it traverses. Without flinching it sinks into each gap or pass, as it comes, and after crossing the narrow valley ascends unfalteringly the steep acclivity on the other side. At the river Irthing, in Cumberland, it met in its westward course a precipice of upwards of a hundred feet in height. It cannot now be ascertained whether it was carried up the face of the cliff or not, for the strata are of soft and yielding nature and are continually being eaten away by the river. Certain it is, however, that the stone wall, accompanied by its ditch, is still to be seen on the very brink of the cliff at its

summit. If it failed to climb this particular cliff, we are assured by Dr. Bruce that it is the only one in the course of the line from sea to sea, which it refused; and if it did ascend it, it must have more nearly resembled a leaning tower than a barrier wall. Naturally the question will suggest itself why it was carried along such precipitous crags, which might be deemed a sufficient protection of themselves. In Dr. Bruce's opinion the answer is two-fold; that the shelter of the wall was required in such places to protect troops, who came from warmer countries, from the bitter northern blasts during the winter months, when the hardy Caledonians were most accustomed to making their attacks; and that the cliffs alone would not have been sufficient to prevent such a bold and agile foe as the Scotch Highlanders from breaking through the barrier.

Thus far we have considered only general conditions common alike to both the main parts of the works. I will proceed to describe with more particularity the method of construction of the murus and the vallum.

For a distance of many miles west from Newcastle the present highway leading to Carlisle runs over what was once the stone wall. When General Wade was summoned from Newcastle, in 1745, to the defence of Carlisle against the young Pretender's forces, he was obliged to turn back at Hexham for the want of a road practicable for artillery, and only reached the western side of the island by a circuitous route, and after a month's delay. The consequence was that Carlisle fell into the enemy's hands, and a hostile force penetrated into the very heart of England. After the rebellion was quelled the government hastened to obviate the recurrence of

such mishaps, and it was determined to make a good road direct from Newcastle to Carlisle. General Wade was charged with the execution of the work; the same officer, whose subsequent exploits in road-making in the Highlands of Scotland gave occasion for the familiar jingle:

“Had you seen but this road before it was made,
You would lift up your hands and bless General Wade.”

The method adopted by him may be clearly seen at the present day. “In dry weather, and particularly after wind,” says Dean Merivale, “we may trace at intervals in the centre of this road the facing stones of the wall *in situ*, lying in lines about nine feet apart, just where they rose above the foundations; while in many places the rough ashlar of its upper courses, thrown loosely down to the right and left, still crop up to the surface, not yet ground to dust by the wear and tear of almost a hundred and fifty years’ traffic.”

As in no part of its course at the present day is the wall entirely perfect, it is difficult to ascertain what its height originally was. The oldest writer who gives its dimensions is the Venerable Bede, whose Ecclesiastical History dates from A. D. 731. He lived in the monastery of Jarrow, anciently a part of the parish of Wallsend, and must have been familiar with the appearance of the eastern end of it at least. He says, “it is eight feet in breadth and twelve in height in a straight line from east to west, as it is still visible to beholders.” This description is probably as it appeared in his own neighborhood, where, in a flat country and on the border of a navigable river, we may naturally suppose it would have been liable to suffer spoliation. The next eye-

witness comes eight hundred and fifty years later. Sir Christopher Ridley, in a letter written in 1572, says "the breadth is three yards, the height remaineth in some places yet seven yards." Samson Erdeswick, who visited the western end of the wall on the Solway in 1754, says "the sea ebbeth and floweth there, and the wall beginning there, and there yet standing of the height of sixteen feet runs for almost a quarter of a mile together along the river side westward." Camden, who saw it in 1599, says that at a place now called *Caer Vorrán*, "the wall thereby was both strongest and highest by far; for scarce a furlong from hence upon a good high hill there remaineth as yet some of it to be seen fifteen feet high and nine feet thick, built on both sides with four-square ashlar stone." It is not unreasonable to suppose that the wall was also originally surmounted by a parapet at least four feet in height. From the concurrent testimony therefore of all these witnesses we may conclude that in its original dimensions it must have been about twenty feet high. Such an elevation would be in keeping with its breadth; somewhat more than twice as high as it was broad. In the portions now remaining it rarely exceeds five or six feet in height; though occasionally in hollows, or other favorable situations, as many as eleven courses of stone are found standing together to the height of nearly as many feet.

The breadth varies considerably; in some places it is six feet; in others nine and a half; so that the average would have been about eight feet, as Venerable Bede states. The frequency with which the breadth varies inclines Dr. Bruce to the belief that numerous gangs of laborers were simultaneously employed upon

the work, and that each superintending centurion was allowed his discretion as to its width. The northern face is continuous ; but the southern has numerous out-sets and insets, measuring from four to twelve inches ; probably at the points where the sections joined.

The same difference in superintending skill seems also to be sometimes indicated by the quality of the masonry. The stones are always of the shape that can be most easily quarried, and of a size which admits of easy transport ; never exceeding what a man could carry slung over his shoulders. When good material was available near at hand it was taken ; but an inferior quality of stone was never used to avoid the labor of bringing a better even from a distance, as great sometimes as seven or eight miles. The quarries that were worked for this purpose can generally be ascertained now, and in some places the quarrymen have left their names carved upon them. The most interesting example of these is carved on the face of a rock, which overhangs the picturesque little river Gelt, in Cumberland.

The wall was faced on both sides with carefully squared blocks from fifteen to twenty inches long, ten or eleven broad, and eight or nine thick ; and the interior was filled in with rubble-work of any sort firmly imbedded in mortar. Its strength has largely depended upon the character of the mortar employed. Limestone, which is abundant in most parts of its course, was ground up and carefully mixed, unslacked, with sand, gravel and chippings of stone. When about to be used, water was freely mixed with the mass, which would set in a few hours, and soon become as hard as rock. The facing-

stones were all roughly hewn into something of a wedge shape and after two or three courses had been set in a thick bed of mortar and carefully pointed, a mass of mortar was poured into the interior, and stones of every kind and shape of a convenient size were puddled in amongst it. Course upon course was added, all preserving their parallelism with great exactness, but making no attempt at breaking joints, and one mass of concrete was piled upon another continuously, until the whole became a solid, compact structure. It might have lasted perfect until now, if man's destroying hand in removing the facing-stones for building purposes, had not given the opportunity for roots of trees and shrubs, and the disintegrating tooth of the frost, to work their will upon it.

Throughout its whole length the stone wall was accompanied on its northern margin by a broad deep ditch, which added greatly to its strength. This can still be traced, with trifling interruptions from sea to sea, even in places where the wall itself has now entirely disappeared; as for example in the fertile districts, where it has been removed on account of tillage. Owing to the moisture that collects upon the site of the ditch the grain springs in it with unusual luxuriance, or it is frequently kept in grass, while all about it is cultivated. Where it traverses a flat country, the material removed from the ditch is often piled upon its northern margin, so as to cause an additional obstruction to an enemy. On the other hand, where it would be of no service whatsoever, as along the edge of a cliff, it is occasionally omitted. A vast amount of labor has been expended in its excavation, where it had to be carried through a rocky soil. In

some spots enormous blocks of stone, one of them estimated to weigh not less than thirteen tons, lie just as they have been lifted out of it. In other places Hodgson tells us that "the earth taken out of it lies spread abroad to the north in lines, just as the workmen wheeled it out and left it. The tracks of their barrows, with a slight mound on each side, remain unaltered in form" (p. 276). The nicety with which the ditch was sloped seems to have varied with different overseers. Sometimes it is as smooth as a modern railway cutting, again it exhibits evident marks of haste and carelessness. Its size in several places is still very considerable; in one it measures forty feet across the top, and fourteen across the bottom, and it is ten feet deep; in another, reckoning from the top of the mound on the northern side, it has a depth of twenty feet.

So much for the mode of construction of the stone wall, or *muris*, the first and most striking of the three parts, which constitute the system of defences. The second, as before stated, consisted of an earth wall, or *vallum*, running always south of the *muris*, and made up of three ramparts and a ditch. One of these ramparts is placed close upon the southern edge of the ditch; the other two, of larger dimensions, stand one to the north and the other to the south of the ditch, and at a distance of about twenty-four feet apart. Even at the



present time the mounds of the *vallum* sometimes rise six or seven feet above the level of the adjacent country.

They are composed of earth mingled not unfrequently with masses of stone, which occasionally preponderates to such an extent as to supply ready material for the construction of dikes. There is every reason for supposing from the accounts given by the ancient writers of the Roman method of constructing earth-works that these mounds were originally strengthened by the addition of a palisade of wooden stakes. The ditch was similar in character to that of the murus, only to judge from present appearances, its dimensions must have been somewhat less. Its usual depth is about seven feet below the natural level of the soil ; so that, as Dr. Bruce tells us, he has seen, while travelling along the highway in its vicinity, a ploughman and his team entirely disappear in descending into it. Like the ditch of the murus it has frequently been cut through beds of stone. Although the distance between the murus and the vallum frequently varies, the lines of the vallum maintain nearly the same relative position to each other throughout their entire course. These lines have become nearly obliterated, in those places where the plough has been wont for so many ages to draw its furrows across them ; but in the grass-lands they are still distinctly marked for miles together ; and where they have enjoyed the protection of being planted over with trees, they are still better preserved.

The *third* portion of the system of defences, and an equally important one, was made up of structures designed for the accommodation of the troops that manned the lines, and of roads over which they and their stores might be transported. These erections were of three kinds, permanent camps, or stations,

mile-castles, and turrets. The last two will require only a few words of explanation ; but the stations were of very great importance, and need to be described at greater length.

They were ranged along the line of the works, at an average distance apart of about four miles, and were adapted for the residence of the commanding officer of the district and to provide secure and comfortable quarters for a strong body of troops. Like all Roman camps, they are quadrangular in shape, and comprise an area of from three acres to nearly six in the case of the largest. They are usually placed upon ground sloping to the south, and abundantly supplied with water. A stone wall some five feet in thickness surrounded them, and they were provided with a gateway upon each side. In all but three instances the murus, when not coinciding with the northern wall of the station, comes up against the north side of the east and west gateways. In the same manner the vallum approaches close to the southern wall of the station, or comes up to the south side of the gates. Main streets intersect the stations, proceeding from the four gateways, and crossing each other at right angles ; and there were also minor streets, parallel to the others, but narrower. The abundant ruins outside the walls indicate that extensive suburbs were required for the accommodation of the camp-followers ; in many instances these seem to have developed into small towns. But it is evident that the stations were constructed with exclusive reference to defence ; and no indications of luxury, like the fine mosaic pavements so common in ruins of Roman villas, found in the south and west of Eng-

land, have ever been discovered in the region of the wall.

In ascertaining the number of these stations, and the designations under which they were known to the Romans, a document which has come down to our own times from those of the Roman occupation of Britain, has proved to be of the greatest service. It is styled, "*Notitia Dignitatum*," that is, a register of the several military and civil officers and magistrates, both of the eastern and of the western empires, with the names of the different places where they were stationed. Dr. Bruce calls this the army-list of the Roman Empire, but Guizot more properly compares it to a modern red-book, or court almanac, with the single difference that the red-book gives the names of the persons in office, while the *Notitia* mentions only the offices. It is believed to have been compiled about the end of the reign of Theodosius the First; in the opinion of the historian Gibbon, "between the final division of the empire (A. D. 395), and the successful invasion of Gaul by the Barbarians, (A. D. 407)." * In that chapter of the *Notitia* which gives an account of the military establishment of Britain there is a list of the prefects and tribunes under the command of the Honorable, the Duke of Britain. That portion of the British section, with which we are at present concerned, bears the heading, "Also along the line of the wall," and contains a list of the stations connected with it, twenty-three in number.† However, as there is no

* *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xvii.

† "*Notitia Dignitatum*," Ed. Böcking, c. xxxviii; vol. ii. p. 113*; "Item per lineam valli. Tribunus Cohortis Quartæ Lingonum Segeduno; Tribunus Cohortis Primæ Cornoviorum Ponte Æli; Præfectus Alæ Primæ Asturum Conderco;

statement that they are actually upon the rampart, or that they are recited in the order of their position, or whether the enumeration is from the east to the west or *vice versa*, the early English antiquaries had no clue by which to identify them, except the fallacious one of the similarity of the ancient names to modern ones, and all of their guesses have turned out to be wrong. But the first twelve stations mentioned in the Notitia have been accurately determined by means of inscriptions found in their ruins; for in the Notitia with each station the designation of the battalion attached to it is given. We are thus enabled to identify numerous localities with absolute certainty, to ascertain the order in which they were enumerated, and hence to determine with confidence other places in the series.

A very careful and costly survey has been made by Mr. McLaughlan for the Duke of Northumberland of the whole line of the wall; and from it an admirable map has been compiled, on which the position of the stations is laid down.

Segedunum, the *first* station named, we can have no doubt was Wallsend, at the eastern extremity, and not

Tribunus Cohortis Primæ Trixagorum Vindobala; Præfectus Alæ Savinianæ Hunno; Præfectus Alæ Secundæ Asturum Cilurno; Tribunus Cohortis Primæ Batavorum Procolitia; Tribunus Cohortis Primæ Tungrorum Borcovo; Tribunus Cohortis Quartæ Gallorum Vindolana; Tribunus Cohortis Primæ Asturum Æsica; Tribunus Cohortis Secundæ Dalmatorum Magnis; Tribunus Cohortis Primæ Æliæ Dacorum Amboglanna; Præfectus Alæ Petrianæ Petrianis; Præfectus Numeri Maurorum Aurelianorum Aballaba; Tribunus Cohortis Secundæ Lingonum Congavata; Tribunus Cohortis Primæ Hispanorum Axeloduno; Tribunus Cohortis Secundæ Thracum Gabrosenti; Tribunus Cohortis Primæ Æliæ Classicæ Tunnocelo; Tribunus Cohortis Primæ Morinorum Glannibanta; Tribunus Cohortis Tertiæ Nerviorum Alione; Cuneus Armaturarum Bremetenraco; Præfectus Alæ Primæ Herculeæ Olenaco; Tribunus Cohortis Sextæ Nerviorum Virosido."

Bowness, at the western, because here was found an altar, dedicated to Jupiter by the prefect of the fourth cohort of Lingones, which the Notitia tells us, was stationed at that place. Pons Ælii, the *second* station, must have been at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Numerous coins of Ælius Hadrianus have been found there, and the easternmost of three Roman roads leading to Scotland, crossed the Tyne there by a bridge, the abutments of which have been seen in recent times.

Condercum, the *third* station, the Notitia tells us was guarded by the first troop of Asturians (from Spain), and a stone so inscribed was discovered at Benwell. Vindobala, the *fourth*, and Hunnum, the *fifth*, can only be identified by their position between Condercum, (Benwell) and Cilernum (or Chesters), the *sixth*. For at Chesters, on the north Tyne, several slabs have been found bearing the name of the second troop of the Asturians, which according to the Notitia was stationed at Cilernum. We have the same kind of evidence that Procolitia, the *seventh*, with its first cohort of Batavians, was at Carrawburg, and that Borcovicus, the *eighth*, the camp of the first cohort of Tungrians, was at Housesteads. All of these stations are upon the actual line of the wall; but Vindolana, where the fourth cohort of Gauls was placed, the *ninth* station of the Notitia, is shown by inscriptions found there to have been at Chesterholm, which lies more than a mile to the south of the rampart; Æsica, the *tenth*, is Great Chesters, where a cohort of the Asturians was stationed; and Magnæ, the *eleventh*, where was the second cohort of Dalmatians, is proved by the evidence of another altar to have been Carvoran. Amboglanna, the *twelfth*, as is

shown by an inscription recording the presence there of the first cohort of the Dacians, must have been at Birdoswald, where it was found.

In this way the ancient designations of the first twelve stations on the line from Segedunum (Wallsend) to Amboglanna (Birdoswald) have been accurately ascertained; but westward from that point no evidence from inscriptions has been discovered to identify another station. The fertile character of the country between the Irthing and the Solway has stood in the way of the preservation both of the wall itself and of any antiquities connected with it. Stone is scarce there, and the materials of the wall and the stations have been consumed in the construction of houses, fences and dykes. Besides, the superstitious inhabitants have looked upon all stones bearing inscriptions as unlucky, calling them "witch-stones," which hindered the butter from coming, and wrought other mischief. This could only be prevented by pounding them in pieces. Up to the present time, accordingly, the identification of the last eleven stations of the Notitia has continued to be a matter of much uncertainty, and antiquaries differ greatly in regard to them. Carlisle, which, all agree, represents the ancient Luguwallum, is not mentioned among the stations along the line of the wall. It is plainly identified, however, in one of the so-called Itineraries, or lists of roads, stations and distances, over the whole extent of the Roman Empire, three of which have come down to us from the fourth century. In the Antonine Itinerary, in which the names and distances from each other of the towns and stations along the principal military roads in Britain are put down, one

route is given as that from London to Luguwallum on the Wall.* Probably the reason it was not put into the Notitia was that it was so strong a place that a fixed garrison was not required there. The names of all these numerous stations, which must have been household words in the days of the Roman occupation, have been almost completely obliterated from the local vocabulary. The reason is that the choice of their situation was dictated solely by military and not by commercial necessities. The only exceptions to be found, according to the opinion of Dr. Beddoes, are Magnæ (or Carvoran), which word seems to be a Celtic translation of the Latin "Great Town;" and Carlisle, (the Welsh *Caer-luel*), in which instance the Roman Luguwallum sounds like the Welsh word Latinized.† These places, many of which were for centuries the abodes of busy men, resounding with the hum of multitudes and the clash of arms, now present a scene of utter desolation. Their long occupation, however, has given to their sites a degree of fertility, which they will never lose; and their débris is even now regarded as the best possible fertilizer. Wherever the soil is turned up, fragments of Roman pottery, bones of animals, horns of deer, and other imperishable articles are universally to be found.

Of the different Roman Legions, which were at various times employed for the conquest of Britain, three were at one period or another stationed at the wall, and all of these have left upon it written memorials of themselves. They were the Second (called the Aug-

* A full account of the British Itineraries may be found in Dr. Guest's "*Origines Celticæ*," vol. ii., p. 101-118.

† *The Races of Britain*, p. 33.

ust), the Sixth (styled the Victorious, Pious and Faithful), and the Twentieth (whose appellative was Brave and Victorious).^{*} Accompanying them were bands of auxiliaries from the most distant quarters of the empire. Not less that eighteen different nationalities are represented among them. Gauls and Spaniards; Germans and Dacians; Thracians and Dalmatians, and even Moors, have all left their imperishable records. There is, however, scarcely a trace of Britons having been so employed; although we learn from the *Notitia* that a squadron of British horse was stationed in Egypt, a cohort of Britons in Armenia, Elder Britons in Illyricum, and Invincible Younger Britons in Spain. That these barbarian battalions continued to retain their distinct nationality seems to be indicated by the names that have been preserved of the deities they severally worshipped. There are Teutonic and Celtic divinities, such as Moguntis, Vitires, Balatucader, and Taraunus; or Eastern deities like Mithras and Astarte; as well as the more familiar representatives of the Roman Pantheon. But it is noticeable that troops belonging to the same nation were never placed in contiguous stations. Thus, for example, there were three corps of Asturians, (from Spain) stationed along the wall, but they were widely separated from each other by bands of Batavians,

^{*} The other legions serving in Britain were the ixth which was probably exterminated during a revolt of the Brigantes, having its place afterwards taken by the vth (Mommsen, "*Provinces of the Roman Empire*," vol. i., p. 204; Hubner, "*Inscrip. Brit. Lat.*," No. 241,) and the xivth, which was finally withdrawn from Britain (A. D. 70), by Vespasian, (Horsley, "*Britannia Romana*," B. i., Chap. vi., p. 82). Portions also of the viith, viiith, and xxind were brought over by Hadrian; of the viith no traces have been ever discovered in Britain; of the viiith a bronze boss of a shield is in possession of Canon Greenwell; and of the xxind a dubious relic is preserved at Abbotsford (Hubner, p. 100 and Nos. 495 and 846).

Germans and Gauls. In this way mutiny was rendered impracticable.

As regards the number of men required to garrison the wall only an approximate estimate can be made. Of the twenty-three stations fifteen were garrisoned by a cohort, which varied in its composition from six hundred to a thousand. A troop of cavalry, or *ala*, numbered three hundred; and as there were five *alæ*, with three other differently designated bodies of men, which are believed to have been of equal size with the *ala*, it may fairly be reckoned that the average strength of the garrison was from ten to fifteen thousand. Besides these the Sixth Legion, numbering six thousand men, had its headquarters at York (*Eburacum*), not much farther off than the length of the wall, with which it was connected by three excellent military roads.

I have already stated that in addition to the stations, mile-castles, so-called from their average distance apart, were placed, to protect the troops who guarded the contiguous stretch of the wall against sudden surprise. These were quadrangular buildings, usually measuring about sixty feet in each direction, and built against the southern face of the *mur*us.

That they were constructed at the same time is evident from the resemblance of their masonry. Although they were usually at the same distance from each other, yet whenever the *mur*us had to cross a river, or a mountain pass, we find a mile-castle placed conformably to guard the passage. They are provided with gateways, both on their northern and their southern sides, at least ten feet wide. As in all the stations and mile-castles, reckoned together, there must have been at least one

hundred gateways opening to the north, it is plain that the wall was not intended as a mere fence, but rather as a line of military operations, designed to overawe a foe whose assaults were chiefly to be expected from that quarter.

Turrets, or watch-towers, were the last of the different structures built along the line of the wall, to which I have alluded. Four were placed between each two mile-castles, and they were little more than strong stone sentry-boxes, about four yards square on the inside. They must have been quite within hailing distance of each other, but tradition has further reported that speaking-tubes were laid along the whole line of the wall for the purpose of rapidly conveying information. Thus the poet Drayton makes the wall declare :

“ Townes stood upon my length, where garrisons were laid
 Their limits to defend ; and for my greater aid,
 With turrets I was built, where sentinels were placed
 To watch upon the Pict ; so me my makers graced
 With hollow pipes of brasse ; along me still they went,
 By which they in one fort still to another sent,
 By speaking in the same, to tell them what to do,
 And so from sea to sea could I be whispered through.”*

This singular tradition, doubtless, owes its rise to the lead pipes occasionally to be met with in the ruins of the stations, or to the earthen pipes, which are quite common there ; both of which were used for the purpose of conveying a supply of water. Hubner, however, quotes a singular statement, apparently corroborative of some such employment of speaking-tubes, from the historian, Dion Cassius (B. lxxiv., ch. 14), in which he tells about a similar provision of brazen pipes, used for the

* “ Poly-olbion,” by Michael Drayton : *The twenty-ninth Song*.

purpose of connecting the towers along the line of the wall of Byzantium.*

So much for the various structures of the great wall. But these arrangements were not enough ; the barrier was also provided with its military roads, without which all the rest would have been useless. It might almost be said that the chief purpose of the murus and the vallum was to protect, and to conceal from view, as well upon the south as the north sides, the bodies of men that marched over the military road. This road is usually about seventeen feet wide (a breadth greater than that of the famous Appian Way a few miles outside of Rome), and it is substantially built after the well-known Roman fashion. In most places, where it still remains, it is now completely grass-grown, but it can easily be distinguished from the adjacent ground by the fineness of the herbage upon it. It runs from mile-castle to mile-castle, not always keeping close to the murus, but taking the easiest path between the required points. In the craggy portions of the central part of the island, where the murus shoots over the highest and steepest summits, the road winds a tortuous course, engineered from point to point by the easiest gradients, but still often with a very great degree of steepness. To avoid this rocky region, therefore, and thus to facilitate communication, an additional road was constructed, quite a distance south both of the murus and the vallum, following more nearly the course of the valley of the South Tyne. Much of this still remains, and is called at the present time *The Stanegate*. It ran from *Cilernum* (Chesters), to *Magnæ* (Carvoran), and even farther ; that is, from a point above

* *Corpus Inscript. Lat.* Vol. vii., p. 104.

the junction of the North Tyne with the South Tyne, to the Irthing, one of the head waters of the Eden. Moreover, the wall was crossed by two great lines of communication, the Watling Street, and the Maiden Way, each having various subsidiary roads branching from it, by which, as I have already said, reinforcements could easily be forwarded from the great city of Eboracum (York).

These elaborate details in regard to the characteristics of the great Roman Wall in Britain, confirm what a recent visitor to it has well remarked, that it "required for its construction as least as much skill and labor as a modern railway through a wild and distant region. . . . The amount of transportation of materials with the small facilities at command, made the labor relatively, if not actually, greater; and the work of maintenance was of course much greater." *

The question now recurs who was the actual constructor of this elaborate and scientifically contrived system of fortifications. It has been assigned to different ages and to many individuals; but there are three principal hypotheses that have been maintained in regard to it. The old English chronicler, Gildas, writing about A. D. 560, and Nennius, in the eighth century, say that it was not built until towards the middle of the fifth century, after the Romans had abandoned possession of the island; and that it was constructed at that time by a legion sent back for this purpose for a brief period in answer to the importunate cries of the miserable inhabitants. This statement not only seems in itself highly improbable, under the prevailing conditions of the Roman empire at that

* "The Imperial Island," by James F. Hunnewell, p. 41.

date, but it lacks confirmation either from inscriptions or from coins. Nevertheless it was copied by Bede and the mediæval writers, and it has even colored the opinions of the older school of English antiquaries. The late lamented John Richard Green, however, repudiates it utterly. He first quotes the statement of a Byzantine historian that "in A. D. 410 a letter of the Emperor Honorius bade Britain provide for its own government and its own defence ;" * then he adds : " Few statements are more false than those which picture the British provincials as cowards, or their struggle against the barbarian as a weak and unworthy one. Nowhere, in fact, through the whole circuit of the Roman world was so long and so desperate a resistance offered to the assailants of the empire. Unaided as she was left Britain held bravely out, as soon as the first panic was over, and for some thirty years after the withdrawal of the legions the free province maintained an equal struggle against her foes." †

The opinions of Gildas, however, have found a modern supporter in Dean Merivale, although he employs a considerable latitude in his interpretation of them. To quote his exact language : " Hadrian connected the camps of Agricola with a fosse and palisaded rampart of earth. . . . Severus, two generations later, may be supposed to have thrown up the second line of earthworks which runs parallel to those of Hadrian, and is evidently formed to support them ; and finally the stupendous wall of solid masonry running as an exterior bulwark a few yards to the northward from end to

* Zosimus, Lib. vi. (trans. of Löwenklau, Basel, 1576), p. 114.

† The Making of England. *Introduction.*

end, may be ascribed most probably neither to Hadrian, nor Severus, but to the age of Theodosius and Stilicho.”*

A very different theory from this was elaborated by the great antiquary Horsley, to whom I have already referred, and it has been accepted by many standard historians, such as Gibbon, and his editor, Dean Milman, and very recently by Dr. Guest.† Horsley thought that most of the stations along the wall were built by Agricola, and that the northern mound of the vallum was his military way. The southern mounds of the vallum, with its ditch, he ascribed to Hadrian, whom he represents as taking for his military way the one which Agricola had constructed. The stone wall with its fosse and all its works, he ascribed to Severus. And there is even a variation upon this hypothesis suggested by Mr. Robson, the writer of the article, “Vallum Romanum,” in Smith’s “Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography.” He considers the stone wall to be the work of Hadrian, and the earthen rampart to have been built by Severus. But there is one fatal defect in Horsley’s theory: it requires that Hadrian in constructing his wall should have rested satisfied with a military way that lay completely open to the enemy upon the exposed side of the north.

The theory, however, which is most widely known, and has been most generally accepted by modern antiquaries and by recent historians, such as Mommsen and Hubner, Green, Elton,‡ and Scarth,§ is what

* History of the Romans under the Empire, Chap. lxvi. (Am. ed., vol. vii., p. 348).

† Origines Celticae, vol. ii., p. 90.

‡ Origins of English History, pp. 324–328.

§ Roman Britain, pp. 73–82.

is called the “Ælian hypothesis.” This regards the murus and vallum as forming one system of fortification, as I have endeavored to show, and attributes their construction to the Emperor Publius Ælius Hadrianus, about A. D. 120.

This view was first propounded by Hodgson, the historian of Northumberland, a life-long and devoted student of the question, in opposition to the opinion of Stukeley, who thought all the works were constructed by Severus. But it has found its most persistent and strenuous advocate in another scholar who has devoted even more time to the question than Hodgson. I refer of course to Rev. Dr. John Collingwood Bruce, to whose sumptuous volume entitled “The Roman Wall” I have already acknowledged my indebtedness. He has been sustained by the antiquaries of Northumberland, despite the clamors of those of Cumberland, who have generally maintained the Severus theory.

It now only remains for me to consider in a few words the several arguments in favor of the Ælian and against the Severus hypothesis, so far as they rest upon the very scanty notices to be found bearing upon the question in the Latin and Greek writers.

The earliest authorities who make any mention of a wall in Britain are Dion Cassius,* and Herodianus.† Both wrote in the Greek language; both were contemporaries of Severus, and both give an account of his expedition into that country (A. D. 208); for which, in fact, Dion Cassius is the principal authority. If, therefore, Severus built the wall, we should certainly

* Dion Cassius, lxxii., 8; lxxvi., 12.

† Herodianus, iii., 14.

expect them to have spoken of it. As they do not, the inference is that it was a well-known object, when Severus landed in Britain. The next writer who has anything to say upon the subject is Spartianus, who composed lives of several of the emperors, about the end of the third, or the beginning of the fourth century, long after the events he described. In the life of Hadrian he merely says "he went to Britain . . . and there first drew a wall (murum) eighty miles in length, in order to divide the barbarians from the Romans."* In his life of Severus he relates that "he secured Britain, which is the chief glory of his reign, by a wall (muro) drawn across the island to the boundary of the ocean on either side."† It is upon this passage that the advocates of the Severus theory mainly rest their case ; but the advocates of the Ælian hypothesis explain it in two ways. Some believe that Spartianus refers to the wall in Scotland, of which I have already spoken, built some sixty or seventy years before Hadrian's time by Lollius Urbicus, legate of Antoninus Pius ; others think that Spartianus, writing so many years after the event, owing to lapse of time and distance from the locality, was misinformed and reports Severus as having built a wall, whereas in fact he only made repairs upon one already in existence, built by Hadrian. Subsequent writers, it is true, who lived long afterwards, ascribe the wall to Severus ; but the silence of his contemporaries seems to be much more significative.‡

* Spartianus, "Vit. Hadriani," 11.

† Idem, "Vit. Severi," 18 ; cf. 22.

‡ Eusebius, ap. Hieron. Chron. (Migne. Patrol. Lat. tom. xxxiii. p. 638) ; Aurelius Victor, "De Cæsaribus," xx ; Idem, "Epitome," xx ; Eutropius, viii., 19 ; Orosius, vii., 17 ; Cassiodorus, p. 640 (Ed. Mommsen).

Gildas and Nennius derived their ideas from these late writers in regard to the condition of Britain at the time of the withdrawal of the Romans; but it must be borne in mind that Nennius in giving the native traditions puts the wall, which he says was built by Severus, between the Forth and the Clyde and not in England. Tradition seems to have handed down not only the name of Severus but the recollection of his severe discipline, his decision of character, his "incredible labors in cutting down woods, levelling hills, making marshes passable and constructing bridges," which Dion Cassius relates, as well as of his immense losses of men, "not less than fifty thousand perishing." Tradition would even have it that three hills near York, where he died, which are actually remains of an ancient glacial moraine, were mounds raised by his troops to celebrate his funeral rites; and to this day they go by the name of Severus' Hills. Such an immortality of fame seems almost like the lurid glow illuminating the memory of Nero in the minds of the peasantry of the Roman Campagna, and it has found an echo in the verses of Spenser, in his celebrated description of the English rivers:

"Next these came Tyne, along whose stony banks
The Roman monarch built a brazen wall,
Which mote the feeble Britons strongly flank
Against the Picts, that swarmed over all;
Which yet thereof Gaulsever they do call." *

But as Severus was only in Britain three years altogether, the question may fairly be asked what opportunity could he have had for constructing such an enormous work. Surely he would have had no reason for

* *The Fairy Queen*, Book iv., Canto xi., st. 36.

doing this before his expedition into Scotland, in which he purposed to completely crush the northern barbarians; and there was not time enough for it between his return and his death.

But on the other hand, when we turn to the wall itself and the autograph statements its builders have left upon it, we read a very different story from what tradition has told. If Severus was the builder, we should expect to find frequent intimations of the fact in the stations and mile-castles, its most conspicuous elements. But the truth is that from Wallsend to Bowness we do not find, in the stations upon the line of the murus, a single inscription which belongs to his reign; while at Procolitia, Vindolana, Æsica, Magnæ, and at the station near Walton House, we meet with them commemorating Hadrian. So, too, the mile-castles, which are essential parts of the murus, but have no immediate connection with the vallum, bear similar testimony. Not one of them has yielded an inscription to Severus; while, on the other hand, five have supplied dedications to Hadrian. What is most significant is the circumstance that four of these mile-castles stand upon a part of line farthest removed from the vallum, and lying at a much higher elevation. This negatives the supposition that they could have been brought from the vallum; upon the theory that it only was the work of Hadrian. It is true that in three of the supporting stations, which are removed by a considerable distance from the line of the wall, memorials of Severus have been found, as well as in two ancient quarries. But when we make a comparison with the number of inscriptions that have been found in connection with the wall in Scotland, bearing the name of its builder, Antoninus

Pius, the fewness of those found near the lower isthmus, containing the name of Severus, would seem to preclude the possibility of his being its constructor. It is highly probable that Severus, before setting out upon his expedition into Scotland, would put the stations upon his line of march in good condition, and would make needed repairs along the line of the wall; and for this purpose he would naturally resort to the same quarries which had been worked by Hadrian. But in the very act of quarrying his workmen would necessarily remove the traces of their predecessors; so that quarry-marks in general seem to be of but little avail in determining the question of who was the builder. One discovery, however, made in an ancient quarry, does throw a great deal of light upon the question, and points conclusively to Hadrian. I refer to what is known as the *Thorngraston Find* of ancient coins. During the construction of the railway from Newcastle to Carlisle, in 1837, there was discovered near the station of Borcovicus (Housesteads), about half a mile south of the line, in an old quarry, buried amongst the chips of stone, a peculiarly shaped bronze vessel, somewhat like a skiff in form. This contained three imperial gold coins, wrapped up in a piece of leather, together with sixty silver denarii. The quarry had not been touched since the time the purse was deposited in it. Now as the coins bearing the latest date, all of which are unworn by circulation, belong to the reign of Hadrian, the conclusion seems to be irresistible that the Romans ceased to resort to the quarry during his reign.

In justice to the memory of the great Horsley, it ought to be borne in mind that all of this great amount of evidence from inscriptions has been discovered sub-

sequently to his time. He knew of only a single doubtful inscription bearing the name of Hadrian. Finally, we must remember that the erecting of such a monumental structure as is the wall is entirely in accord with the character of Hadrian. He was a great builder, as numerous works, in different parts of the empire, among them the well-known Castle of St. Angelo, at Rome, bear witness to this day. We may therefore conclude, I think, that the great Roman Wall in Britain may safely be called THE WALL OF HADRIAN.

For almost one-third of its entire length, from Wallsend to the North Tyne, there are only scanty remains left of it to be seen now. If the traveller chooses to take a long drive out of Newcastle, sixteen miles due west, over General Wade's excellent road, which I have already referred to, he will come to the spot where the old Roman road, The Watling Street, or, as it is less euphoniously denominated in the neighborhood, The Devil's Causeway, crosses the line of the wall. Before reaching it, however, as he approaches Halton, in the neighborhood of Hannum, the *fifth* station on the line, of the Notitia, he will see at Down Hill one of the most striking examples of the vallum anywhere remaining. Close to this station, in the year 1850, a stone was found bearing the inscription, *Fulgur Divom*, "the lightning of the Gods." It was the ancient belief that those who were struck dead by lightning had suffered under the special visitation of the gods, and they were buried upon the spot where they fell. Several examples of this same inscription have been found in different parts of Europe where they are preserved in the museums at Florence, Nimes, Palermo, and elsewhere. The one to which I

am now referring may be seen in the museum at Newcastle.*

By far the most important portion, however, that still remains of these remarkable works is that extending for a distance of twenty-one miles, from Chesters (Cilernum), on the North Tyne, to Birdoswald (Amboglanna), on the Irthing, a branch of the Eden; and to this I shall confine my description of what can now be seen of them.

If only a single day can be devoted to exploration, it will be well for the traveller to take an early train from Newcastle by the Northern Counties Railway, for the station at Chollerford, twenty-four miles distant. Upon leaving the station he will find on the bank of the river, about a quarter of a mile below, one of the most remarkable remains of the wall which time and violence have spared. I refer to the abutments and piers of the Roman bridge, which once carried the military way across the North Tyne to Cilernum, the *sixth* station. The murus, still standing eight feet high, reaches the brink of the river and there terminates in a square building, in front of which is the eastern abutment of the bridge. After this had lain buried for ages under beds of sand and gravel, through a change in the course of the river to the westward in 1860, the bank was left in such a situation that the remains could be excavated and thoroughly explored by Mr. Clayton.

On the opposite side of the river stands the fine park and mansion of Chesters, Mr. Clayton's residence, where what remains of Cilernum can be seen. This gentleman is the owner of three of the principal stations, Cilernum, Borcovicus, and Vindolana, and of a large extent of the

* "The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon," by Thomas Wright, p. 389.

wall itself. He has taken unwearied pains, and expended large sums of money in the exploration and preservation of its antiquities. These are worthily displayed in the noble portico added to the house for that purpose, not long ago. The traveller must not linger too long, however, over the relics of Cilernum, and over the ancient Roman cemetery, with its sepulchral slabs, near the river's side, but had better take horses at once and drive due west ten miles along the line of the wall to Housesteads Farm, the site of Borcovicus. For some miles his course will be over General Wade's road in long straight reaches up hill and down, the stones of the murus distinctly visible in its surface. After passing Walwick and ascending the long hill on which stands the old Taye Tower, all the lines of the barrier come grandly into view, running in apparent parallelism with each other. Here the road takes to the north bank of the vallum, and a great stretch of the wall appears on the right ; and before long the hill called the Limestone Bank is reached. This is some eight hundred feet above the level of the sea, and, commands a distant view of the Cheviot Hills. Here for the first time he will meet with distinct traces of the ancient military way, although it is not that, but the ditches, both of the murus and the vallum, which form the most remarkable features of this spot. Where they cross the crown of the hill, they have been excavated in the basaltic formation with enormous labor. The huge blocks lie about just as they were left by the workmen, and it is not easy to conceive how such enormous masses could have been extracted without the help of gunpowder. Hence onward the road stretches westward in a long dip over

Tepper Moor, with the vallum running by its side, and presenting here one of its most striking displays still to be seen. Soon the traveller arrives at the low and grass-grown relics of Procolitia (Carrawburg), the *seventh* station, about three and a half miles distant from Ciler-num. This station comprised an area as large as three and a half acres, but, as the greater part of it is still unexplored, little else appears than the gateways, which are readily discerned. The murus forms its northern wall, and the vallum comes up on each side to the defense of the east and west gateways. Leaving Carrawburg, he soon reaches Carraw, once a rural retreat for the monks of Hexham, which lies some seven or eight miles away to the south-east. Here the traveller leaves the cultivated land for the wild moorland, stretching away to the north in great green waves. The murus directs its course to the precipitous ridge of the highest of these, while the vallum seeks the bottom of the long and broken hill, half way up which stands a stone-built farmhouse, called Sewingshields, or "the cottage by the fosse."

Just north of the wall here once stood the noted mediæval strong-hold built for protection against the moss-troopers, called Sewingshields Castle. This is the place referred to by Scott, in the sixth canto of "Harold, the Dauntless," under the name of "The Castle of the Seven Shields;" but as the poet sings, now:

"no towers are seen
On the wild heath, but those that Fancy builds;
And save a fosse that tracks the moor with green
Is naught remains to tell of what may there have been."

But though its last material relics were removed

several years ago by the proprietor, tradition has much to tell about the marvels of this spot. King Arthur and Quéen Guinevere, with all their court, here sleep enchanted in a chamber underground, never to come forth until their deliverer shall blow the bugle horn, placed on a table at the entrance, and then, with "the sword of stone" lying by its side, shall cut the garter also lying there. No one had ever heard where was the entrance to this enchanted hall, when one day a shepherd sitting knitting among the ruins, happened to drop his ball, which rolled down a deep, subterranean passage. Following up the clue, he penetrated to the chamber, and by the light of a fire that streamed up from a crevice in the floor, he beheld the king and queen, and all the company of sleepers. Grasping the sword, he drew it from its scabbard ; the eyes of all the company opened and they rose upright. Then the shepherd cut the garter, but forgot to blow the horn ; whereupon the spell resumed its power, and the king sank back to sleep, exclaiming :

" O woe betide that evil day
On which this luckless wight was born,
Who drew the sword, the garter cut,
But never blew the bugle horn."

As was natural, terror brought loss of memory, and the unfortunate shepherd never afterwards was able to find the entrance to the enchanted chamber.

As the traveller proceeds on his westward course, he descends into a broad, basin-like recess in the ridge, called Busy Gap, a pass chiefly frequented by the moss-troopers and marauders of the olden time. A Busy Gap rogue was a term of reproach as late as the close of the

seventeenth century. When Camden and Cotton visited the wall, they did not dare to venture into this neighborhood "for the rank robbers thereabouts." The only peril to which the pedestrian is now exposed in this secluded region is of encountering some savage bullock, as he crosses the wide fields.

At the top of the slope, about a third of a mile from the road, stands Borcovicus, the *eighth* station, about five miles distant from the last. Here at the lonely farmhouse, called Housesteads, it will be well for the traveller to dismiss his carriage, and for the remainder of his pilgrimage to trust to his own resources. It is a fine walk, of some eight miles, over the hills, and for quite a distance along the wall itself to Caw Gap, and thence across the fields to Haltwhistle station, where the train may be taken back to Newcastle.

Far around lies a vast and striking solitude, above which rise the gray and lichen-clad walls of one of the largest stations, five acres in extent, and certainly the most interesting one still remaining. The English antiquaries find words fail them in attempting to describe its wonders. Stukeley, in 1725, called it "the Tadmor of Britain"; and Dr. Bruce claims that parts of it "present a spectacle, which even those who have visited the Italian Pompeii will not despise." All the gateways are excellently preserved, but the western is the most complete. In every sense this gateway has been a double one; two walls have to be passed before the camp is entered; each was provided with two portals; and each of the outside portals was supplied with two-leaved gates. In the middle was a strong gate-post, against which the leaves closed; and on each side was a guard-

chamber for the sentries. The northern one is still standing, fourteen courses high, and only requiring a roof to make it habitable. It was heated by a flue running round the sides under the floor. The projecting stones of both jambs are worn in such a fashion as to suggest that they were used by the idle soldiers to whet their swords upon. To give some conception of the labor and cost of the excavations made here by Mr. Clayton, we are told that, when he began, not a stone of this gateway was to be seen, and the surface was covered with a turf of unusual luxuriance. The same was the case with all the rest of the station. The opposite gateway, on the east, was discovered to have been anciently walled up, and on the floor was found a cart-load of mineral coal. There is no doubt that the Romans made use of such coal, when beds of it occurred in the vicinity. An ancient colliery worked by them in the neighborhood of Benwell (Condercum), the *third* station, has been explored by Dr. Bruce. The seam of coal there was two feet thick, and shafts had been sunk to the depth of between twelve or fifteen feet. So, too, at Habitancum (Risingham), the first station north of the wall, on the Watling Street, there was discovered a bath with a furnace and more than a cart-load of coal.

The southern gateway is of an unusually massive character, and shows traces of having been appropriated by some moss-trooper for his home. The shed in which he secured his cattle at night; the kiln in which he dried his half-ripened grain; and some of the steps by which he climbed to his little fortress over the cattle-shed may still be made out.

One of the most interesting features to be noticed at

the gateways is the pivot-holes, where the double gates swung, and the grooves worn into the thresholds by the wheels of the passing chariots.

Two principal streets ran from north to south through the interior, now one mass of desolation, and these were intersected by one running transversely from east to west. In the northern section of the middle division are remains of large buildings; one is 78 feet by 18; another, to the south, is even larger, 147 feet by 30. From certain differences in the character of the masonry this is believed by Dr. Bruce to date from the time of Severus. In two spots the station walls have been made wider by building an interior wall and filling up the intervening space with stones bedded in clay, so as to make a solid platform of masonry twenty feet wide. Undoubtedly these were intended for platforms, on which to plant a ballista, or engine for throwing heavy missiles (the artillery of Roman times), as several stones, weighing a hundred pounds or more, and roughly cut into a round or conical shape, were found lying near it. Two inscriptions, recording the construction of similar ballisteria, together with several stones of the same shape, have been discovered in the course of excavations made by the Duke of Northumberland at High Rochester (Bremenium), the second station north of the wall on the Watling Street. Josephus, in his account of the siege of Jerusalem, has given some remarkable instances of the destructive force of the ballista, which threw stones to the distance of a quarter of a mile.*

Outside the station walls, both on the south and the

* Wars of the Jews, Book iii., chap. vii., 23.

east, are remains of numerous buildings attached to it. In 1856 there was discovered on the east side a carefully guarded passage through the wall, giving access to a little amphitheatre, constructed on the north side. It is about a hundred feet in diameter and ten feet deep and was intended for the sports of the garrison.

The numerous altars, bas-reliefs, statues and inscriptions that once excited the admiration of visitors, lying about exposed to constant depredation and the wear of the elements, have all been removed for safety either to Mr. Clayton's museum at Chesters, or to that at Newcastle, or the one at Alnwick Castle.

From Borcovicus, westward, a long reach of wall extends to Rapishaw Gap. On the way the traveller will pass one of the finest of the mile-castles along the whole line, with its wall still standing in fourteen courses, to the height of nine feet and a half. Here is, perhaps, the most picturesque scenery to be found in the whole walk. The cliffs rise with long and moderate slopes to the south, but dropping abruptly away to the north, so as to present a formidable barrier in that direction. The murus is to be seen in its full perfection and grandeur, running from hill to hill and cresting the crags. On the right lie the dark blue loughs of Northumberland, sleeping in the hollows of the moorland; on the left is a magnificent view over the valley of the Tyne to Skiddaw and the hills of Cumberland. For a long distance the path has lain along the top of the broken and dismantled wall. After dropping into the gap, it ascends and crossing a long ridge, commanding an extensive view, it comes to a neat little farmhouse, called the Hot Bank, the home of the ancient family of the

Armstrongs, situated in a hollow called the Milking Gap.

One mile due south of Milking Gap, lies Chesterholm, the Vindolana of the Notitia, and the *ninth* in the line. Here for the first time we meet with a station lying south of both lines of the barrier ; others, so situated, occur to the westward, but in no instance so far removed from it as this. The vallum here is at its maximum distance from the murus, sweeping away from it in two curves, south of the vallum. Vindolana stands upon the direct line of the Stanegate, the military way leading from Chesters (Cilernum) to Carvoran (Magnæ), and as it commands the important defile which gives access to the valley of the South Tyne, it may well have been a fortress, previously planted here by Agricola. This station has been for time immemorial the common quarry of the farm here, and of all the neighborhood, so that but little remains of it, although many altars and inscriptions have been found in it. But the most interesting relic connected with it is the Roman mile-stone, standing near the northeastern angle of the station, on the very spot where Roman hands planted it at least seventeen centuries ago. The pillar is six feet high, and one foot ten inches in diameter. Traces of an inscription are visible on its western face, but only a letter or two can be made out. It is the only Roman mile-stone in England, still occupying the position where it was originally placed.

Rejoining the wall at Milking Gap, and continuing his course westward, the traveller soon reaches another striking gap, where on mounting the hill he finds the rubble-built core of the wall very conspicuous, as it shoots

due north in order to seize the extreme edge of the cliff. Descending again he comes to still another gap, in which is a very fine specimen of a mile-castle, which was excavated by Mr. Clayton in 1854, and gives the name of Castle-Nick to the locality.*

The walls of this mile-castle are in an excellent state of preservation, seven feet thick, and about five feet high. Its interior dimensions are sixty-two feet from north to south, by fifty from east to west; and the foundations of the structures originally standing inside of it are still visible. The military way, in its immediate neighborhood, is very clearly to be traced, twenty feet in width, and having both kerb-stones still in place.

Continuing on his way, the traveller soon reaches a minor depression in the steep and broken crags, called The Cat's Stairs, down which it will be best for him to scramble, and walk along the plain to the next opening, which goes by the name of Peel Crag Gap. As the defile here is wider than usual, with long and gentle slopes on each side, special precautions have been taken to guard it. On both sides of the pass the walls bend sharply to the south with the result of narrowing the gorge and exposing an enemy to a flanking fire, within half bow-shot on either hand. The great ridge of basalt here disappears for a space, and sandstone takes its place, up which on a long and moderate slope the wall stretches, till it reaches the summit, called Winshields Crags, one thousand feet above the sea level. In all directions is a most extensive view. On a clear day ships sailing on the Solway can easily be descried, and the hills of Dumfriesshire, sixty miles away due west, are in plain sight. To

* It is shown in the frontispiece, from "Bruce's Roman Wall," p. 226.

the south of west. is seen the mountain group of the Lake District, with Skiddaw for its prominent feature. No towns or villages are in sight, and only a few scattered houses, not one of them near at hand. In the midst of this solitude and silence the great wall stretches far away to the west.

By a gentle descent the traveller comes to a gap of bold proportions upon which popular superstition has bestowed the ill-boding appellation of The Bogle Hole. This may perhaps be the very spot to which an eminent Byzantine historian of the sixth century refers : " In this isle of Britain men of ancient time built a long wall, cutting off a great portion of it ; for the soil and the men, and all other things are not alike on both sides. On the southern side there is wholesomeness of air in conformity with the seasons ; moderately warm in summer and cool in winter. Many men inhabit there, living much as other men. The trees with their appropriate fruits flourish in season ; the corn-fields are as productive as others, and the district appears to be sufficiently fertilized by streams. But on the northern side all is different, in so much indeed, that it would be impossible for a man to live there even half an hour. Vipers and serpents innumerable, with all kinds of wild beasts, infest that place ; and what is most strange the natives affirm that if any one passing the wall should proceed to the other side, he would die immediately, unable to endure the unwholesomeness of the atmosphere. They say also that the souls of men departed are always conducted to this place."*

The veracious historian goes on to tell a long story about the methods of this infernal transportation, which

* Procopius, *Bell. Goth.* iv. 20.

I will not quote, as I only wish to give a glimpse at the wholesome terrors the Scotch Highlanders had inspired in the sixth century in the purlieus of the imperial palace at Constantinople.

Leaving this spot, with its name of evil omen, the traveller soon comes to the defile, called Caw Gap, through which runs a modern highway leading northwards into Scotland. After passing this he comes to another mile-castle, which has also been excavated by Mr. Clayton, and found to closely resemble the one at Castle-nick. This goes by the name of Cawfields. Here the land becomes lower and more fertile, and as a consequence cultivation has brought with it the destruction of the stone work of the wall. But before the traveller has quite reached the spot here indicated, if he intends to take the train at Haltwhistle, he must leave the line of the wall and descend the long grassy slopes to the highway. On his way he will pass certain relics of the Age of Stone, two menhirs, locally called "The Mare and Foal," huge, rough, upright stones, similar to those found in many countries of western Europe.

This is as much of wall-exploration as a "well-girt" traveller can possibly accomplish in one day, that is to say from Chesters to Cawfields. The stretch of the wall westward as far as Birdoswald (Amboglanna) is equally well worth visiting, but to accomplish this most conveniently the traveller had better make his point of departure from the western side of the island instead of from Newcastle. He will find Gilsland Spa, a pretty little watering place in the picturesque valley of the Irthing, with its excellent hotel, "The Shaws," a most desirable headquarters for his excursions. Gilsland Spa was vis-

ited by Walter Scott in his youth more than once ; some of the scenes of Rob Roy are laid here ; and here he met his future wife, Miss Charpentier, after having undergone a previous flirtation, recalled by certain "Lines to a Lady, with flowers from the Roman Wall," scarcely good enough to bear quotation. The easiest way of reaching Gilsland Spa is by omnibus meeting the train at the Rosehill railway station, and from it excursions can readily be arranged.

The first one will be to the station of *Æsica* (Great Chesters), the *tenth* along the line of the wall, nearly six miles west of Housesteads. It stands in the open fields a little beyond Caw Gap, where the traveller has left the wall at the end of his previous exploration. Notwithstanding its name, it was one of the smallest stations, not exceeding three acres in extent. Of the *mur*us once described as to be seen here, some twelve or thirteen feet in height, nothing now is left ; but the earth ramparts and ditch are clearly defined. The interesting feature, however, of this station is the aqueduct, by which it obtained its supply of water. The water course consists of a channel three or four feet deep, and proportionately wide, cut in the sides of numerous little hills on the north. To preserve the water level a most circuitous course was taken ; but so effectually has this been done, that we are told by Dr. Bruce it was only necessary to resort to a bridge, or embankment, once. This bridge does not now exist, but its site is indicated by the name Benk's Bridge. The whole length of the aqueduct is six miles, while the distance in a straight line is little more than two miles and a quarter ; and by it the water of Caw Burn is brought close to the station.

Hard by the vallum at the southwest are some prehistoric barrows ; and still further south, near the Stanegate, is a group of Tumuli, which goes by the name of The Four Laws. Near Great Chesters the depression in the land comes to an end, and the crags of basalt again rise high with the murus ascending them. A very fine piece is to be seen here at a place called Cockmount Hill. To the westward of this small traces of the wall are visible until Walltown is passed, when the traveller comes to the towering serrated rocks, known as "The Nine Nicks of Thirlwall," the highest of which, Mucklebank Crag, is eight hundred and sixty feet above the level of the sea.

The wall here climbs and descends the little hills, clinging with its accustomed pertinacity to the rugged edges of the line of basalt. Several interesting sights are to be seen at Walltown. Near the wall is a spring, surrounded by masonry, called by the present inhabitants King Arthur's Well. An ancient tradition tells that here Paulinus baptized Ædwin, King of Northumbria. From the fact of its having been inclosed in so open and wild a country it must have been regarded as a place of historical importance and interest. Chives grow abundantly here in the crevices of the rocks, and the universal opinion would have it that they are a donation from the Romans, although I have read that they are indigenous in other parts of England. However this may be, Camden tells us, in the quaint version of old Philemon Holland : "There continueth a settled persuasion among a great part of the people thereabouts and the same received by tradition, that the Roman soldiers of the Marches did plant here everywhere in old time for their

use certain medicinal herbs for to cure wounds ; whence it is that some empiric practitioners of chirurgery, in Scotland, flock hither every year, at the beginning of summer, to gather such simples and wound-herbs, the virtues whereof they highly commend as found by long experience, and to be of singular efficacy."

After passing "The Nine Nicks of Thirlwall," the basaltic range, which has extended nearly unbroken from Sewingshields, sinks into the plain, and there comes a stretch of fertile, well-cultivated country, two miles wide or more, watered on the east by the little Tipalt, one of the head waters of the Tyne, and on the west by the Irthing, which runs into the Eden. In the defile through which the Tipalt passes stood Magnæ (Carvoran), the *eleventh* station of the Notitia. Here probably Agricola built a fort to guard the pass by which went the Maiden Way, the great Roman road, which runs up to Scotland, on the west side of the island. It has experienced the fate of other stations, placed in the fertile lowlands, and its remains have almost disappeared, notably within the last hundred years. Fortunately a large number of altars and inscriptions discovered here have been preserved, and have positively identified the spot. The lines of the barrier run parallel with each other, down to the banks of the little raging Tipalt, where stand the ruins of Thirlwall Castle, built entirely of stones taken from the murus. Here evidently was the weakest portion of the whole barrier, as it was far away from the strongly defended positions at both ends of it. Mediæval writers tell us that the wall was first "thirled" or broken through, in this vicinity by the northern enemy, and it is from this circum-

stance that the name of the castle is supposed to have been derived.

This would be the locality of the apocryphal ballad, which Robert Surtees pretended to have taken down from the recitation of an old woman, and which he imposed upon Walter Scott, who inserted the whole of it in "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border" (vol. ii., p. 26), after having interwoven the following stanza into Marmion (canto i. st. 13):

" The whiles a Northern harper rude
Chanted a rhyme of deadly feud ;
How the fierce Thirlwalls and Riddleys all,
Stout Willimondswick,
And Hardriding Dick,
And Hughie of Hawdon, and Will o' the Wall,
Have set on Sir Albany Featherstonhaugh,
And taken his life at the Deadman's-shaw." *

Close adjoining Thirlwall Castle is Glenwhelt, about which Scott tells an anecdote to his friend Surtees, who had just played this sad trick upon him, which I will quote, as it has some bearing upon the present state of the wall. In a letter from Edinburgh, February 21, 1807, he writes: " Mr. Ritson, the eminent antiquary was very literal and precise in his own statements, and expecting you to be equally so, was much disgusted with any loose or inaccurate averment. . . . In the course of conversation we talked of The Roman Wall ; and I was surprised to find that he had adopted on the authority of some person at Hexham a strong persuasion that its remains were nowhere apparent, at least not above a foot or two in height. I hastily assured him that this was so far from being true that I had myself seen a

* Memoir of Robert Surtees, by Geo. Taylor—(Surtees' Soc. ed. by Rame), pp. 25 and 237.

portion of it standing almost entire, high enough (for a fall from it) to break a man's neck. Of this Ritson took a formal memorandum, and having visited the place (Glenwhelt, near Gilsland), he wrote back to me . . . 'that he had seen the wall, that he really thought that a fall from it would break one's neck; at least it was so high as to render the experiment dangerous.' I immediately saw what a risk I had been in, for you may believe I had no idea of being taken quite so literally."*

At Wallsend the lines of both murus and vallum are still distinct, but there is not one stone of the wall left upon another. Westward of Wallsend the ditch is of unusually large dimensions, measuring thirty-four feet across the top, and nearly sixteen feet deep.

At the village of Gap, which is said to have received its name from the wall having been breached here, the vallum is very distinct, and stands upon higher ground than the murus. The earth-works are in good condition as far as to the banks of Poltross Burn, the boundary line between the counties of Northumberland and Cumberland, but no remains of the arch by which Camden says that the murus passed the brook are now to be seen. It shows itself again between here and the Irthing; but how it crossed and ascended the other side we have no means of knowing. The cliff here is constantly being undermined by the river, so that all traces of it must have disappeared long ago; but it reappears on the brink above.

There stood Amboglanna (Birdoswald), the *twelfth* and last identified station on the line. It occupies a position commanding and very beautiful, and naturally

* Memoir of Robert Surtees, by Geo. Taylor—(Surtees' Soc. ed. by Rame), p. 39.

strong, as the elevated bluff is surrounded on three sides by the Irthing and one of its little branches. It was the largest of all the stations, having an area of five and a half acres; half an acre larger than Housesteads (Bor-covicus). Its walls are in a good state of preservation and its gateways fine specimens of construction. The murus westward Dr. Bruce considers, taking account not only of the height but the length of the fragment, and the perfectness of its facing on both sides, to be the finest remaining specimen of this great structure.

Here the traveller's excursions will naturally come to an end, unless he feels inclined to take a long and beautiful drive by Lanercost Priory and Brampton to visit the celebrated Written Rock, of which I have previously spoken, on the banks of that pretty little Cumberland stream, the Gelt.